



July 2013

# Alaska WIC Vendor Newsletter



Volume 12, Issue 5

Thanks to our hardworking vendors for submitting complete Price Sheets this Spring!

Fall Price Sheets will be sent to your stores in early October.

## SPIRIT Implementation Dates Set

On September 25, 2013, we will begin the transition from our AKWIC client information system to the new SPIRIT system. On the date we begin to use SPIRIT in a region, AKWIC will be disabled. The changes will also include phasing out our banking contract with Key Bank and starting to process checks through Solutran. All WIC clinics in the state are expected to be on SPIRIT by December 1.

Under the new information management and banking systems, you will see some changes, including:

- All vendors will have a four digit vendor stamp. If you currently have a three-digit stamp, a zero will be added to the beginning of your number. A new stamp will be mailed to you soon.
- For 60-90 days after the SPIRIT start-up, some participants will shop with checks that we issued out of AKWIC and some will have the new SPIRIT checks. Both types of checks will be valid, so long as they are in date.
- The new SPIRIT checks will be mint green in color, and the layout will be different.
- Your banking information will be automatically transferred to SPIRIT and Solutran. You do not need to fill out any new banking forms.
- There will be no changes to the Food List or the food packages listed on the checks.

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### SPIRIT rollout schedule:

**September 23: Anchorage and Norton Sound**

**November 11-15: Matanuska-Susitna, Kenai Peninsula, Southeast Alaska, Bristol Bay, North Slope, and Kodiak Island**

**November 25: Fairbanks, Yukon- Kuskokwim, Northwest Arctic**

Questions? Call the WIC Vendor Unit at 907/465-3100.



## Local WIC Agency Update

WIC participants are served by local WIC agencies (LAs), who determine eligibility and nutritional needs, and provide nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and other services. The State of Alaska awards grants to LAs by region to provide WIC services for a five-year period. A new grant cycle began on July 1, 2013, and there have been some changes to the LAs' service regions.

- Municipality of Anchorage now serves all of Anchorage; the Cook Inlet Tribal Council and Armed Services YMCA on JBER WIC offices will be operated by the Municipality.
- Aleutians and Pribilofs Islands, Valdez, and Cordova are will be served out of Anchorage by a State WIC staff dietitian for at least the next year.

- Metlakatla is now served by the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Corporation (SEARHC), rather than operating under a separate grant.

Local WIC agency contact information is included with this newsletter, and posted on the Alaska WIC Program website at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/nutri/wic/participants/wicfindclinicmap.aspx>. If your store needs to contact a WIC clinic, and you're not certain which clinic to call, Vendor Unit staff will be happy to assist you.

### Why Are Minimum Sizes Required for Some Foods?

WIC food items are carefully selected to respond to participants' specific nutritional needs. To be eligible for the Food List, an item must meet federal food guidelines and be available in a size that fulfills the participant's food package.

Since smaller package sizes are often more costly per ounce or per package, we do not allow smaller sizes for many food items. Also, we require the participant to purchase the largest size, lowest cost for dairy products. We have recently received questions about the following food items:

Food type	Minimum size	Substitution <b>not</b> allowed
Cheese	16oz. (1 lb.)	Two 8 oz. packages not allowed
Cold cereal	12 oz.	9 oz. packages not allowed.
Juice	As listed on the check.	Any size not listed on the check is not allowed.
Breads, rolls, tortillas	As listed on the check.	Any size not listed on the check is not allowed.
Milk	Size listed on the check	Any size not listed on the check is not allowed <u>unless</u> expiration date is under 7 days.



## EBT Planning for Alaska WIC

We'd like to thank all vendors who attended the July 9 teleconference about Alaska's WIC EBT Feasibility Project. The feasibility study is the first step toward the implementation of EBT for our program in responding the U.S. Congress's requirement that all WIC programs transition to EBT by 2020.

The study examined how "online" and "offline" systems can be used in Alaska, and concluded that the simplest and

most affordable solution for our state would be to piggyback onto the existing technology and business arrangements the state uses for SNAP and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) benefits. If the state is unable to negotiate a reasonable cost for adding WIC to the Western States EBT Alliance contract that covers these sister programs, the recommendation is to hold an open competition to bring the lowest cost separate WIC EBT solution to the state.

As we proceed with planning and preparation for WIC EBT, it will be important for vendors to participate so that EBT provides the most benefit to your store. If you are interested in serving on a vendor advisory committee for WIC EBT, please contact Sandy Harbanuk, Vendor Coordinator.



## Cashier and Bookkeeper Reminders!

**Check valid dates!** At the start of each WIC transaction, examine the valid dates of every check! Participants sometimes present an out-of-date check along with checks that are in date. This is the most common error that results in a check rejected by the bank.

**Vendor Stamp!** Stamp the check with your vendor stamp. In a review of check redemptions from the past year, we found that 200-300 checks each month are returned by the bank due to the lack of a vendor stamp.

**MICR Line Problems!** If the “MICR line,” the numbers in the white area at the bottom of the WIC check, are not visible, are cut off, or are otherwise unable to be read, the bank will reject the check. If the MICR line is damaged, you may refuse to accept the check and ask the WIC participant to contact the clinic for a replacement check.

**Participant ID / Comparing Signatures:** Please remember that the participant's Food List is also the WIC ID. After the participant or alternate signs a WIC check, make sure to compare the check signature with the one on the Food List / ID booklet. Do not ask for a photo ID.



## Quick Check Out Procedure Refresher

### Step 1: Check WIC ID located on last page of the Food List / ID booklet

Ask for the Food List/ID booklet before beginning the transaction and hold onto it until the end of the transaction. If the shopper doesn't have a Food List/ID booklet do not proceed; refer them to their local agency.

### Step 2: Verify WIC check dates

Make sure the WIC checks are within their valid date range printed at the top of the checks; do not accept a WIC check outside the valid date range.

### Step 3: Check foods being purchased

Match the quantity, type, brand and size of foods selected with those listed on the WIC check, consulting with the Food List to verify that the items are WIC approved.

### Step 4: Write total on check

Write the total amount of the sale on each check for the listed items that were purchased.

### Step 5: Shopper signs the check

After the total has been written on the check have the shopper sign. Compare the signature on the check with the signature on the booklet ID; make sure the signature of the shopper matches one of the signatures on the Food List/ID booklet.

### Step 6: Finish transaction

Return the Food List/ID booklet to the shopper with their receipt.

## Online Training Resource Coming Soon!



We are currently developing an online training course for WIC Vendors!

This training is highly encouraged for all new cashiers and will serve as a great refresher course for seasoned employees.

Accessible anytime online, this convenient training also counts toward your annual WIC training requirement and will automatically report who has completed the training to the State WIC Office.

Keep an eye out for notification that this online training is available!

## Health and Social Services

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## Vendors!

Please post this newsletter  
for your staff to read



### Alice Albrecht is Retiring !

It has been a pleasure working with all of the Local Agency staff, Vendors and Farmers around the state. My husband and I are planning to sell and move to a warmer climate where I can grow a garden and keep a horse and enjoy our retirement. We intend to do a lot of traveling beginning this fall with a trip down the west coast then back to Florida. I wish all of you a fond farewell.

### Contacting the WIC Vendor Unit

The Vendor Unit will provide assistance to vendors at any time. For questions or complaints, please contact us and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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